



ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA FACT SHEET

June 2009

Public Statements by Senior Saudi Officials and Religious Scholars Condemning Extremism and Promoting Moderation

As home of the Two Holy Mosques of Islam, in Makkah and Madinah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stands as a target of extremists and terrorists who aim to subvert the country's faith. To combat this threat, senior Saudi government officials and religious scholars have long been vocal in condemning the mindset that supports terrorism, and have promoted moderation and tolerance among Saudis and Muslims worldwide.

Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. Unfortunately, there are those who have used religion to advance perverted agendas. Anyone who resorts to violence and extremism in the name of religion is a deviant and a criminal. The open and public expression of these views has been a critical aspect of how Saudi Arabia continues to successfully fight against extremists. The Saudi government seeks to protect the nation from violence and destruction and its youth from deviant ideologies that would corrupt the Kingdom's future.

In the war on terrorism, it is critical to win the battle of ideas, which is why Saudi religious leaders and officials have committed themselves to making certain their views are heard and understood.

- **Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, address at United Nations High-Level Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue, November 12, 2008:** "Terrorism and criminality are the enemies of every religion and every civilization. They would not have appeared except for the absence of the principle of tolerance."
- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, speaking at the First National Conference on Intellectual Security, May 20, 2009:** "I do not think that we have any honor as Saudis to find our sons abroad turning into bombers who kill innocent men, women and children that are not guilty of anything anywhere, whether in Iraq, Pakistan and Lebanon or anywhere else. These individuals make bombing as their profession. This is a dishonorable act and a great sin ... The religion of Islam has nothing to do, whatsoever, with these individuals."
- **Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior Ulema [religious scholars], in an interview with *Asharq Al-Awsat*, October 1, 2008:** "It is our duty and we all – the media, the universities, mosque imams, and mosque preachers – are responsible for fighting these evil thoughts and those that promote them. Such thoughts should be discussed and their corruption exposed. Even the father and mothers should fight these thoughts. We pray to God Almighty that the war on ideological terrorism be fierce and strong and be based on solid foundations and good curricula so that we can close the doors on evil with God's help."

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The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism

Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism program forges partnerships with multilateral organizations and foreign governments to advance counterterrorism objectives and protect national security by going after the men, money and mindset that support terrorism and extremism.

The Men: Counterterrorism Training & Technology: To ensure the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures, Saudi Arabia has increased the size, training and professionalism of its security forces.

- Security professionals participate in international training programs, including in Europe and the United States. Most recently, the Training College of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and the Council of Arab Interior Ministers organized a course on combating terrorism held in Tunisia.
- The Kingdom has implemented the use of aerial reconnaissance planes to help patrol remote areas to protect against smuggling and infiltration. New fencing, motion detectors and thermal imaging systems provide additional coverage, helping to seal the Kingdom's borders.
- Throughout the last decade Saudi security forces have foiled more than 180 terrorist plots within the Kingdom and have dismantled Al-Qaeda's operations.

The Money: Combating Terror Financing: Financial controls and banking regulations stop those who financially support terrorism and extremism within Saudi borders and beyond.

- All Saudi financial institutions have implemented the 40 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the G-8 regarding money laundering and the eight recommendations regarding terror financing.
- The Saudi Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is tasked with handling money laundering and terror finance cases, and the Kingdom is seeking admittance into the Egmont Group.
- Special training programs for bankers, prosecutors, judges, customs officers and other officials from government departments and agencies are offered by the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and the King Fahd Security Faculty, Public Security Training City.
- The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) offers programs, and has implemented a technical program to train judges and investigators on legal matters involving terrorism financing and money laundering methods, international requirements for financial secrecy, and methods exercised by criminals to exchange information.
- The government consolidated oversight in 2004 through the issuance of a Royal order approving the creation of the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad with the responsibility for regulating all charitable activities abroad.



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- The Saudi government and the United States jointly designated several organizations as financiers of terrorism under UN Security Council Resolution 1267, including: the Bosnia-based Vazir and the Liechtenstein-based Hochburg AG; and the Al-Haramain Foundation.

The Mindset: Overcoming Extremism: As a part of Saudi Arabia's long-term counterterrorism strategy, the Kingdom is conducting a "war of ideas," which aims to instill the concepts of moderation and tolerance, and undermine any justifications for extremism and terrorism on an intellectual level.

- To combat the spread and appeal of extremist ideologies among the population, the Kingdom has initiated a Counter-Radicalization Program that instills the true tolerant values of Islam. This effort educates at-risk groups about the dangers of radical Islam and provides positive, alternative outlets—such as encouraging participation in sporting events and athletic programs, social outings, etc.
- Saudi Arabia has been conducting an ongoing program to modernize textbooks and curricula, introduce enhanced teaching methods and provide better training for educators to combat extremism and prepare Saudi citizens for life in a global economy.
- In 2008, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz launched an international effort to promote interfaith dialogue. King Abdullah hosted a meeting on June 4, 2008 of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world to highlight the importance of dialogue and emphasize the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. This was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Spain on July 16, 2008. The conference brought together 300 delegates from around the world representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shintoism. The culmination of this dialogue initiative was a special session of the UN General Assembly, attended by more than 25 world leaders on November 12, 2008.

In combating terrorist-related events, more than 90 Saudi security officers have died and more than 200 have been wounded carrying out their duties. Casualty rates have decreased in recent years as a result of improved training, experience and preventative activities—including increased efforts to combat the financing of terrorism and to eradicate the influence of extremist ideologies.

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The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Political, Economic and Development Initiatives

During the last 50 years, Saudi Arabia has experienced rapid economic development and corresponding societal and political change. To balance this with the nation's rich cultural and religious heritage and facilitate continued progress, the Saudi government has undertaken a number of political and economic initiatives to encourage political participation, promote economic growth, increase foreign investment and expand opportunities for its citizens.

Education—Preparation for the Global Economy: Saudi Arabia views its citizens as the most essential element of the nation's development. To support the Kingdom's continued growth and to meet the needs of a burgeoning youth population, the government allocates about 25 percent of its annual budget to educational initiatives. Initiatives the Kingdom has undertaken during the last decade include:

- *A multi-year program to update textbooks and curricula, introduce new teaching methods and provide better training for teachers.*
- *The establishment of student councils in public schools to begin educating young Saudis about civic responsibilities and participatory governance.*
- *A 25-year strategy developed by the Ministry of Education to align the higher education system with the country's development and job market requirements.*

Modernization—Promoting Development: Developments on the educational front have been complemented by those within the political system. In 2009, King Abdullah made a series of changes within the government:

- *King Abdullah issued a Royal order appointing Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz to the position of Second Deputy Prime Minister*
- *Nourah Al-Fayez was appointed Deputy Minister of Education for Women's Education. She is the first woman to be appointed to the Council of Ministers.*
- *A new Secretary General of the Judiciary Supreme Council*
- *A new Secretary General of the Supreme Economic Commission*
- *A new Director General of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice*

This continuous movement to improve and streamline the government and how it responds to the needs to the Saudi people is a part of Saudi Arabia's strategy to ensure the long-term success of the country and to institutionalize best practices.

Diversification—Building an Economy for the Future: With one quarter of the world's known oil reserves and 13 percent of world production, Saudi Arabia is the world's leading producer and exporter of oil. At the current rate of production, reserves will last for approximately 80 years. Given the finite nature of the country's natural resources and the historical importance they have played in the nation's development, the Kingdom has taken precautions to expand its economic base.



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- *In 2008, the non-oil GDP grew by 4.5 percent to \$223 billion.*
- *Saudi Arabia's non-petroleum exports increased to \$2.7 billion in May 2008, up from \$2.3 billion in May 2007.*

The Kingdom has taken steps to privatize many of its vital economic sectors. The Supreme Economic Council has led these efforts by specifying the sectors to be privatized, including telecommunications, civil aviation, desalination, highway management, railways, health services, government hotels, municipal services, and operation and management of social service centers.

Other efforts to encourage investment in the Saudi economy include:

- The Saudi Arabian Capital Markets Law: The law has stimulated and strengthened the Saudi economy and increased the participation of Saudi citizens in the capital markets by establishing the Saudi Arabian Securities and Exchange Commission (SASEC) to protect investor interests, ensure fair business practices, promote and develop the capital market, license brokers and securities to the public and the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange (SASE), which is the largest in the region.
- Foreign Investment Law: Enacted by the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), the law allows foreign investors to own property, transfer capital and profits, claim full ownership of their projects and enjoy a reduction in tax rates. It also protects foreign investors from confiscation of property without a court order or expropriation of property, except for public interest, against an equitable compensation.

Together, these developments and a decade of other economic reforms led to Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization, making the nation the 149th member of the organization on December 11, 2005. This has opened the Saudi economy to unprecedented opportunities for foreign investment and job creation. The best indicator of Saudi Arabia's economic growth is the increase in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from \$20 billion in 1970 to \$467.5 billion in 2008.

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STATEMENTS ON FIGHTING TERRORISM

- **Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joint Press Conference with Indian Foreign Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, New Delhi, India, December 26, 2008:**

“We should work together to counter this dangerous international phenomenon [terrorism], forbid it from achieving its objectives and uproot it.”

- **Sheikh Saleh Al-Luhaidan, head of the Supreme Judicial Council, *Okaz*, July 9, 2008:**

On Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden: “That man [bin Laden], his actions speak for him. He is not the one to guide a person onto the right path. He is a promoter of evil and depravity, and whoever follows him also pursues depravity ... Without a doubt, anyone who calls to destroy it [the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia], to undermine its security, to harm its installations and economic centers, and who incites the public against it – such a person is a criminal, as are members of Al-Qaeda. Anyone who is associated with [Al-Qaeda] must be punished.”

- **Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance Saleh bin Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Saudi Press Agency, July 4, 2008:**

The Interior Ministry’s efforts were praised for confronting the deviant group and their destructive acts in addition to the preemptive efforts of the security men in uncovering the plots of the group. “The uncovering and aborting of these plots are great efforts...through which lives have been saved and properties have been spared,” said the Sheikh. He also stressed the responsibility of all groups and institutions of society, including those in charge of mosques, to confront the deviant thoughts.

- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, addressing the Shura Council, March 15, 2008:**

“The deviant group sought to develop its destructive capabilities to inflict greater damage on the homeland and its achievements and extended its base of support...I assure you of our continued determination to confront this group.”

- **Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Minister of Foreign Affairs, statement to the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, September 28, 2007:**

“Achieving decisive victory against terrorism requires not only denying terrorists all financial support, but also combating extremist thought and the environment in which it prospers.”

- **Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Land Forces Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia, February 28, 2006:**

“...Victory [in the war on terrorism] also depends on eliminating the mentality of extremism and violence that perverts religion; on raising the level of global consciousness about different faiths and cultures; and on solving the political problems that enflame passions.”

- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, ABC, "Nightline," October 14, 2005:**
 "...We will fight the terrorists and those who support them or condone their actions for 10, 20 or 30 years if we have to until we eliminate this scourge.... We are fighting terrorism and extremism in our midst.... We have also regulated our charities and we have closed offices around the world, and we have withdrawn support for institutions that we found to be extremist."
- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpt from address to Hajj pilgrims, January 21, 2005:**
 "Terrorism leads to corruption on earth and to destruction; the Kingdom has therefore been confronting it in its various forms, and working to uproot it, refuting the deviant ideas believed in by terrorists, and clarifying Islam's position on terrorism."
- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, addressing the Shura Council, June 20, 2004:**
 "We will not allow a wicked group driven by a deviant ideology to destabilize the Kingdom's security."
- **Shaikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, *Arab News*, November 8, 2003:**
 Shaikh Al-Sudais, the imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, on November 7 denounced plans by militants to destabilize the Kingdom and undermine its security...
 "They [militants] have violated the sanctity of time and place and committed terrorism, violence, bombings, crime and corruption," the Makkah imam said while delivering his Friday sermon. ...
- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, *Arab News*, July 22, 2003:**
 "These misguided groups, whose members' minds have been possessed by the devil, will be punished and defeated, God willing, along with those who support them", he said.
- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, addressing the Shura Council, May 17, 2003:**
 "We will not allow any deviant ideology that encourages and feeds terrorism. This nation is determined to eradicate all forms of terrorism...."
- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, in an address to the nation, May 13, 2003:**
 "The tragic, bloody and painful events that took place in the heart of our dear capital, Riyadh, last night, in which innocent citizens and residents were killed or injured, prove once again that terrorists are criminals and murderers with total disregard for any Islamic and human values or decency. ... The perpetrators are but a small group of deviants whose objective is to do harm to our society by doing damage to its security.
 "On the other hand, the whole Saudi nation, old and young, men and women, stand shoulder-to-shoulder in condemning this heinous act and expressing their rejection of

those who perpetrated it. We will be steadfast in defending our homeland, the cradle of Islam, and the heart of the Arab world.

“If these murderers believe that their criminal and bloody act will shake our nation or its unity, they are mistaken. And if they believe they can disrupt the security and tranquility of our nation, they are dreaming. This is because the Saudi people, who have embraced the Holy Book as their guide and the Shari’ah as their way of life, and who have rallied behind their leaders, who in turn embraced them, will not permit a deviant few to shed the blood of the innocent which God Almighty, in His infinite wisdom and justice, has sanctified. The entire Saudi nation, and not just its valiant security forces, will not hesitate to confront the murderous criminals.

STATEMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO FIGHT TERRORISM

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Minister of the Interior, *Arab News*, June 29, 2008:**

Prince Nayef called on the international community to cooperate in order to stop terror funding, saying: “If they fail to dry up their financial sources, terrorism will prevail.” He added that the Kingdom increased security around oil installations after it was revealed that suspected militants were plotting to attack these and other vital economic installations. He further praised Saudi security forces for preempting attacks and called on Saudis and expatriates to cooperate in their fight against terrorism.

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, *Arab News*, July 25, 2005:**

“We are now looking forward as an Arab and Islamic world to think and unite in fighting terrorism. These terrorist activities are targeting Islam and peace between people and countries of the world. If we do not move together, then terrorism will continue.”

- **Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Counter-Terrorism International Conference, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, February 5, 2005:**

“We are fighting terrorism, those who support it and those who condone it. We will continue to do so until we eliminate, with the help of God, this evil...It is our hope that this conference will usher in a new era of international cooperation in the war against terrorism that will enable us to rid our world of this threat.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpt from address to Hajj pilgrims, January 21, 2005:**

“Saudi Arabia has called on all peace-loving countries to work together to combat the phenomenon of terrorism through a comprehensive plan based on the United Nations. It is essential to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. No country in the world should ever provide shelter to terrorists, nor should any country ever enable them to practice their subversive acts from its territory. In line with this policy, the Kingdom has called

for an international conference on combating terrorism to be convened in Riyadh on February 5, 2005.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz excerpts from a statement from the Holy Site of Mina on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, February 10, 2003:**

“The government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has often condemned terror in all its forms. It has taken a leading role in urging the international community to challenge this sinister world phenomenon.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpts from a letter to President George W. Bush on the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, September 10, 2002:**

“The target of the terrorists who engineered this crime was humanity at large. They hoped that this outrageous act would incite and ignite bloody strife among different faiths and civilizations. But their evil was turned against them, for all humanity united to fight terrorism, and wise voices from all corners of the world arose to echo your declaration that terrorism has no religion or nationality; that it is pure evil, condemned and abhorred by all religions and cultures.”

“Your friends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia denounced and condemned the September 11 attacks as strongly as did the American people. We, like you, are convinced that nothing can ever justify the shedding of innocent blood or the taking of lives and the terrorizing of people, regardless of whatever cause or motive. Therefore, we do not simply reiterate sincere and true condolences to the relatives of the victims, but assure all of our continued will and determination to do our utmost to combat this malignant evil and uproot it from our world.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, address to the United Nations Millennium Summit, September 6, 2000:**

“The phenomenon of terrorism is still widespread in all parts of the world, although fluctuating considerably, and still requires greater effort from our organization in order to contain and combat it. The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always denounced all forms and shapes of terrorism, and added its efforts to those of the international community to address this serious phenomenon. What should be emphasized in this respect is that extremism, violence, and terrorism are global phenomena, not restricted to any people, race, or religion. In view of the internationalism and comprehensiveness of this phenomenon, addressing and combating it effectively can only come through agreed-upon international action within the framework of the United Nations, that ensures the elimination of terrorism, conservation of innocent life, and preservation of the supremacy and stability of the State.”

STATEMENTS ON EXTREMISM AS CONTRARY TO ISLAM

- **Prince Khalid Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz, speaking at the International Conference on Fatwa and its Controls on January 17, 2009:**

“Ignorance in religion and being prejudiced in fatwa are the most dangerous challenges to the Muslim community.”

- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, speaking to the heads of state and heads of Hajj missions in Mina on December 9, 2008:**

“The objective of this interfaith dialogue, which was initiated by your brothers in the Kingdom, is to strengthen the pride of Islam and serve humanity... Today we are in need of dialogue within the Muslim Ummah (community) itself... division, ignorance, and extremism are obstacles threatening the hopes of Muslims. Also, terrorism is threatening the world and it is attributed to Muslims alone because of the actions of few extremists who represent none but themselves. Though they put on the guise of Islam, the religion is innocent and not responsible for their acts. This makes dialogue among the Muslim Ummah necessary to unify the ranks, bolster moderation, remove the causes of conflict and eradicate extremism.”

- **Shaikh Saleh Al-Talib, Imam at the Grand Mosque, in his sermon during the Eid Al-Adha prayer, December 9, 2008:**

“The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent as Mercy to all – Muslims and non-Muslims.”

- **Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior *Ulema* [religious scholars], April 2, 2008:**

“Fanatical zeal cannot be considered part of religion, even if they [extremists] falsely pretend to be devout...”

- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, address to the Shura Council, Saudi Arabia, April 1, 2008:**

“Development can only be achieved in a climate of security and safety. So, we reiterate our resolve to annihilate the deviant group of murderous terrorists and fight the deviant thought with a sound one.... There is no room in the country of the Two Holy Mosques for extremism.”

- **Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Ireland and Ambassador Designate to the United States, CNN, “Late Edition,” July 24, 2005:**

“...Islam is a religion of peace and harmony, and understanding, and, therefore, if there is anybody who is misusing Islam for any purpose whatsoever, we cannot accept that. And we do not accept that.”

- **Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz opening remarks at the World Conference on Dialogue, Madrid, Spain, July 16, 2008:**

“It is therefore incumbent upon us to declare to the world that difference must not lead to conflict and confrontation, and to state that the tragedies that have occurred in human history were not attributable to religion, but were the result of extremism with which some adherents of every divinely revealed religion, and of every political ideology, have been afflicted.”

- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior Ulema, in a statement issued following the terrorist attacks in London, July 8, 2005:**

“Killing and terrorizing innocent people and the destruction of property are not condoned by Islam. Attributing all these horrific incidents to Islam is unjust. Muslims should tell the truth and unveil falseness, and inform all people that Islam is a religion of righteousness, betterment and progress.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpt from address to Hajj pilgrims, January 21, 2005:**

“The world has witnessed acts of terrorism that aim at undermining the pillars of stability and security as well as intimidating innocent people. Unfortunately these acts have been perpetrated by people who claim they belong to Islam. We would like to make it clear that these terrorist acts in fact run counter to the teachings of Islam, and have been carried out by individuals whose ideas are deviant.”

- **Shaikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, Imam at the Grand Mosque in Makkah, *Arab News*, January 21, 2005:**

“Islam is a religion of moderation. There is no room for extremism in Islam.... Islam is a religion of peace that abhors attacks on innocent people.”

- **Shaikh Dr. Salih bin Abdullah bin Humaid, Imam at the Grand Mosque in Makkah, SPA, June 18, 2004:**

Shaikh Dr. Salih bin Abdullah bin Humaid spoke out against terrorism at a Friday prayer, reiterating that any terrorist act is criminal and contrary to religion. The perpetrators of these acts, members of a deviant group, he said, have killed and intimidated people, destroyed property, and wreaked havoc on earth; and therefore they will surely be punished in hell in the hereafter.

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpt from address to Hajj pilgrims, February 2, 2004:**

“The entire world, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has been harmed by many acts of terror intended to undermine stability, and spread fear and evil. Some of these events have been perpetrated by individuals unfortunately claiming to be Muslims. It is necessary to clarify the position of Islam concerning these events and their perpetrators.

These acts, and those who carry them out, are deviant. It is important to oppose them. These acts are a function of false ideas, contrived by individuals who have strayed from the truth, and contradict the teachings of religion.

- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, February 2, 2004:**

In a sermon to almost two million pilgrims at the peak of the Hajj, Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars, highlighted the importance of educating others about Islam, so that terrorists will not be able to claim that their reprehensible actions have anything to do with the true faith:

“You must know Islam’s firm position against all these terrible crimes. The world must know that Islam is a religion of peace and mercy and goodness; it is a religion of justice and guidance ... Islam has forbidden violence in all its forms. It forbids the hijacking airplanes, ships and other means of transport, and it forbids all acts that undermine the security of the innocent.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, January 8, 2004:**

“Islam advocates moderation.... The bullets that kill women and children, terrorize those secure in their safety, and destroy innocent communities, come not only from rifles, but from deviant thoughts and misguided interpretations of our great religion and its noble message.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, in an address to the nation, May 13, 2003:**

“There can be no acceptance or justification for terrorism. Nor is there a place for any ideology which promotes it, or beliefs which condone it. We specifically warn anyone who tries to justify these crimes in the name of religion. And we say that anyone who tries to do so will be considered a full partner to the terrorists and will share their fate. As revealed in the Holy Qur’an: ‘If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (forever); and the wrath and the curse of God are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.’”

- **Prince Bandar bin Sultan, in a statement issued following the terrorist attacks in Riyadh, May 13, 2003:**

“...These terrorists have turned their backs on our people and they have perverted our faith; they do not in any way represent Islam. They only represent hatred towards all of humanity.... we are determined to eradicate the terrorists who bring violence and hatred to the whole world, as Crown Prince Abdullah declared today.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz excerpts from a statement from the Holy Site of Mina on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, February 10, 2003:**

“This religion [Islam] is a religion of peace and tolerance, ease in the implementation of religious teachings, duties and rites; and tolerance in day-to-day dealings with people.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, February 4, 2003:**

Crown Prince Abdullah urged a gathering in Riyadh of young people from around the world to shun extremism, saying: “Ours is a tolerant and temperate faith and we must conduct ourselves accordingly. There is no room for extremism or compulsion in Islam. In fact, it violates the tenets of our faith and the traditions of our Prophet.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, excerpts from a letter to President George W. Bush on the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, September 10, 2002:**

“We in Saudi Arabia felt an especially great pain at the realization that a number of young Saudi citizens had been enticed and deluded and their reasoning subverted to the degree of denying the tolerance that their religion embraced, and turning their backs on their homeland, which always stood for understanding and moderation.

They allowed themselves to be used as a tool to do great damage to Islam, a religion they espoused, and to all Muslims. They also aimed at causing considerable harm to the historic and strong relationship between the American people and the people of Saudi Arabia. I would like to make it clear that true Muslims all over the world will never allow a minority of deviant extremists to speak in the name of Islam and distort its spirit of tolerance.”

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, address at the Eighth Organization of the Islamic Conference Summit, December 9, 1997:**

“The Muslim world is still suffering from a state of fragmentation and disruption and is going through the worst as a result of extensive militancy which has shed innocent Muslim blood in the name of Islam,” the Crown Prince said, adding that the slogans raised by these militants are “outrageous and have nothing in common with Islam and its spirit of justice and tolerance.”

- **Leading Saudi clerics, Friday sermons following the terrorist attack in Al-Khobar, June 28, 1996:**

The Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, Sheikh Saleh bin Humaid cited many Islamic principles that forbid terrorist acts of killing, violence, and intimidation of peaceful and innocent people, and made it clear that violence and terrorism will not succeed anywhere on earth because they run counter to all religions, all international norms and laws. He called on religious scholars, writers, thinkers and intellectuals to clarify the true course of Islamic behavior and to advise on how to avoid deviations in ideology, referring to the important role that the mass media can take in this regard.

Similar exhortations were made at the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, where Imam Ali Al-Huzaifi called the explosion in Al-Khobar serious sedition, aggression, and corruption, adding that such terrorist and destructive acts are totally forbidden in Islamic teachings.

- **Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, address at the United Nations 50th Anniversary, October 23, 1995:**

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represents the heart of the Muslim world, from whose soil the Islamic faith emerged; a faith which places peace at the forefront of its virtuous principles and rejects violence and terrorism."

STATEMENTS ON COMBATING EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Interior, at a press conference after attending the 7th Engineering Conference at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, December 2, 2007:**

"Security efforts alone cannot eliminate terrorism. The intellectual effort is also necessary as it prevents extremist ideas from taking root in the minds of young Saudis."

- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, November 30, 2008:**

Addressing the Ninth Makkah Conference, Introducing Islam to non-Islamic countries – Reality and Aspirations," Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Shaikh underlined the importance of explaining Islam correctly in order to promote moderation over extremism.

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Interior, delivering an anti-terrorism speech at Islamic University, November 26, 2008:**

Addressing staff and students at Islamic University in Madinah, Prince Nayef underlined the serious threat posed by deviant groups that pervert the teachings of Islam and kill innocents. He urged the university to study the causes of radicalization in order to find ways to prevent it. After his remarks, Prince Nayef inaugurated the Islamic University's new website devoted to fighting terrorism.

- **Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance, Saleh Al-ASheikh in a statement, October 22, 2008:**

Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance Saleh Al-Asheikh welcomed the trials of the 991 militants suspected of conducting terrorist attacks in the Kingdom over the past five years. He said the trials will bring justice for both the families of the victims and families of the suspected militants. Al-Asheikh emphasized the need for advocating moderation among Saudi youth and the use of mosques as a platform to reject extremist ideology.

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Interior, in remarks at Umm Al-Qura University, October 15, 2008:**
Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, in remarks at Makkah's Umm Al-Qura University, said intellectual security is important to the security of the public. He noted universities can help eradicate extremism through their studies and scientific cocepts.
- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, July 16, 2008:**
"We have adopted a comprehensive anti-terror strategy that not only focuses on the security side but also includes preventing financing of terrorism and dealing with its intellectual roots as well as rehabilitating the followers of deviant ideologies after giving them counseling."
- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, in a press conference after opening the Seventh Engineering Conference at King Saud University, *Al-Watan*, December 2, 2007:**
"We hope that [harmony between ideological and security efforts] can be achieved ... Unfortunately, the ideological effort has not reached the level that we hope for. Security measures in themselves are not sufficient; it is mainly action on the ideological level that prevents rogue ideas from influencing the minds of youths."
- **Comment by the Council of Ministers during a Cabinet meeting, Saudi Press Agency, April 9, 2007:**
"The media and cultural agencies must do more in confronting the phenomenon of terrorism, by rooting out terrorist ideology and addressing social and international factors that promote terrorism."
- **Adel Al-Jubeir, Foreign Affairs Advisor to Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard, Speech, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, March 7, 2005:**
"...Saudi Arabia has taken steps to combat the mindset that instills and justifies acts of terror, hatred and violence. Islam is a religion of peace, benevolence and tolerance, and we will not allow deviants to corrupt our faith.... Violence and extremism are not part of our Islamic faith or Saudi culture or traditions."
- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, Counter-Terrorism International Conference, February 5, 2005:**
"In fact, terrorism is not just an act, but the product of an aberrant ideology that must be fought. That is why the onus of the responsibility lies with all societies, with all their institutions, to confront and combat terrorism since, just as the security institutions have their obligations, cultural - academic, mass media, and educational - institutions have a great responsibility to inculcate the right ideals and sound human values and to immunize societies against any delinquent ideas or evil deeds."

▪ **The Council of Call and Guidance, Saudi Press Agency, April 26, 2004:**

The Council of Call and Guidance, in its meeting on April 25, condemned the explosion [at the General Department of Traffic in Riyadh on April 21], and urged confrontation of the deviant ideas that lead to such criminal acts. The Council, which comprises representatives from various areas of jurisprudence including the Islamic Affairs Ministry, the Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, and the Islamic universities, called for fortifying young people against destructive ideas that run counter to the teachings of Islam.

▪ **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, January 8, 2004:**

"I have no doubt that the establishment of the Center [The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue] and the continuation of dialogue within its boundaries will become a historic achievement that contributes to the creation of a channel for objective expression that would have an effective impact in combating extremism and fostering a pure atmosphere that could give birth to wise positions and illuminating ideas that reject terrorism and terrorist thought."

STATEMENTS ON THE ROLE OF MOSQUES IN DENOUNCING EXTREMISM

▪ **Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance Saleh Al-Asheikh, statement to the Saudi Press Agency, July 4, 2008:**

Al-Asheikh emphasized the need for society and religious establishments to combat terrorism and extremist ideology. He noted that some young Saudis have been misled into branding people and even some Muslim religious scholars as infidels. Imams and preachers should teach and guide the youths before they fall prey to the influence of extremists and become outlaws.

Al-Asheikh said that the first responsibility lies with the family and then the imams at mosques to confront extremism and protect the youth from extremist ideologies.

▪ **The Shura Council, June 29, 2008:**

The Council praised the June 25 announcement that Saudi authorities had arrested 701 suspected militants in the last six months. It commended the government's security efforts and stressed that fighting extremism is the responsibility of all, especially religious scholars, teachers and preachers.

▪ **Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance Saleh Al-Ashaikh, *Arab News*, May 10, 2008:**

"A preacher should know that it is his religious duty to speak out against terror and misguided ideologies as he is aware of what the Shari'ah says on the matter...When a

preacher believes in what he is saying and is in the need of uprooting extremist ideologies his words will be sincere and strongly influence the people.”

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, in a press conference after opening the Seventh Engineering Conference at King Saud University, *Al-Watan*, December 2, 2007:**

“Pulpits of mosques should be used to guide people. When they are used for other purposes, it is an error that can lead to the gravest danger, namely violation of the faith and rebellion against the ruler.”

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, *Okaz*, December 1, 2007:**

“There is ongoing cooperation between the Ministries of Interior and Islamic Affairs to do so, but we would like to see more such cooperation to ensure that pulpits are devoted to the most important issues and to warning against dangers.”

- **Chief Justice of the Jubail Court Sheikh Riyadh Al-Muhaidib, *Al-Watan*, October 29, 2007:**

“Cursing peaceful non-Muslims is not accepted in Islam ... Preachers are required to follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in this respect.” He added, “Preachers play a significant role in explaining Islam to all people, including People of the Book. Imams of mosques who deviate from the path of tolerance and moderation are few and do not represent a trend. Nonetheless, these isolated incidents should not be allowed to distort the image of our faith and country around the world, especially in areas where there is a large concentration of People of the Book, such as Jubail and Yanbu.”

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, during a meeting to over 600 prayer leaders and imams in Jeddah, *Arab News*, June 21, 2007:**

“It is your responsibility to confront this problem [deviant ideology] by applying your knowledge, minds and courage.” He noted that there are at least 14,000 Friday mosques in various parts of the Kingdom and continued, “This means we have 14,000 platforms. If the khatibs use this opportunity to expose the deviants and their ideology, it will have a great positive impact upon society.”

- **Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, June 15, 2004:**

“Senior religious scholars in Saudi Arabia have continually and unequivocally condemned terrorism. In our war against terrorism, these condemnations are a powerful weapon.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, addressing the Shura Council, May 17, 2003:**

“...It is the responsibility of our religious leaders to save our youth from the evil of destructive thoughts that propagate extremism and hatred and only result in devastation and ruin.”

- **Shaikh Saleh Al-Ashaikh, in an official letter to Saudi religious leaders, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, December 7, 2002:**

Minister of Islamic Affairs Shaikh Saleh Al-Ashaikh said in the letter that restrictions have been put in place to prohibit unauthorized persons from making speeches at mosques. The order, distributed as part of a new program for the care of mosques and their workers, warned speakers at mosques against making provocative speeches and inciting people.

The letter said that mosques are meant only for prayer, guidance and other pious activities and should not be used as political platforms.

Al-Ashaikh warned speakers against misusing mosques to make provocative speeches or incite people or exploit mosques by reciting poems in praise of some misguided people. Violators of the order can be subject to severe punishment, including removal from office.

Al-Ashaikh also commended the efforts of the imams and khuttab in fulfilling their religious duties by leading people in prayers and providing advice and guidance. He also called upon the imams and khuttab to serve as models for others by spreading love and brotherhood.

STATEMENTS CONDEMNING VIOLENCE AGAINST INNOCENTS

- **Sheikh Salman al-Oadah, *Arab News*, January 6, 2008:**

"...How much blood has been spilled? How many innocent children, women and old people have been killed, maimed and expelled from their homes in the name of Al-Qaeda? Are you happy to meet Allah with this heavy burden on your shoulders? It is indeed a weighty burden—hundreds of thousands of innocent people, if not millions. How could you wish for that?"

- **Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, in a statement following the killing of Egypt's envoy to Iraq, July 8, 2005:**

"Killing of the souls that Allah prohibited is a greater crime and one of the greatest sins, as Allah says: 'And kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause,' and Allah also says: 'Because of that we ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder or to spread mischief in the land, it would be as if he killed all mankind.'"

- **Shaikh Saleh Al-Luheidan, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, Saudi Press Agency, May 2, 2005:**

"Shedding the blood of the innocents is prohibited everywhere, and whoever does not believe in its prohibition is a sacrilegious deviant."

- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Saudi Press Agency, February 4, 2005:**

On the eve of the Counter-Terrorism International Conference in Riyadh, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh issued a statement condemning

the “ugly acts of terrorism” and declaring that they must be confronted at all levels. Malicious acts of the terrorists, he said, include killing non-Muslims who are living in the Kingdom, accusing Muslims of being “infidels,” and calling for them to be attacked. All Muslims should therefore cooperate to eradicate extremism and make young people aware of its dangers.

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, in an address to the nation, May 13, 2003:**
 “As revealed in the Holy Qur’an, the taking of an innocent life is a crime against all of humanity. In the words of the Prophet (God’s peace and mercy be upon him): ‘He who kills a resident living in peace among you, will never breathe the air of heaven.’”
- **Council of Senior Ulema (religious scholars) edict, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, February 11, 2003:**
 “The acts of shedding the blood of innocent people, the bombing of buildings and ships, and the destruction of public and private installations are criminal acts and against Islam. Those who carry out such acts have deviant beliefs and misguided ideologies and are to be held responsible for their crimes. Islam and Muslims should not be accountable for the actions of such people. Islamic Law clearly prohibits leveling such charges against non-Muslims, warns against following those who carry such deviant beliefs, and stresses that it is the duty of all Muslims all over the world to consult truthfully, share advice, and cooperate in piety and righteousness.”
- **Shaikh Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Subail, Imam of the Grand Mosque of Makkah and member of the Council of Senior Islamic Scholars, Saudi Press Agency, December 4, 2001:**
 “Any attack on innocent people is unlawful and contrary to Shari’ah.... Muslims must safeguard the lives, honor and property of non-Muslims who are under their protection and with whom they have concluded peace agreements.”

STATEMENTS CONDEMNING SUICIDE BOMBINGS

- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Saudi Press Agency, April 22, 2004, the day after a suicide bombing in Riyadh:**
 Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh issued a statement citing verses from the Holy Qur’an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad that clearly stipulate such an act as “forbidden and highly sinful.” He also declared that it is forbidden to cover up such acts, or to express justification for them, and whoever does so, is an accomplice to the crime.
- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, in a statement issued September 15, 2001:**
 “The recent developments in the United States constitute a form of injustice that is not tolerated by Islam, which views them as gross crimes and sinful acts.”

- **Shaikh Salih Al-Luheidan, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, in a televised statement on September 14, 2001:**
 “As a human community we must be vigilant and careful to oppose these pernicious and shameless evils, which are not justified by any sane logic, nor by the religion of Islam.”
- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, in an interview with *Sharq Al-Awsat*, April 21, 2001:**
 “What you call suicide bombings in my view are illegitimate and have nothing to do with jihad in the cause of God. I am afraid it is another form of killing oneself.”

STATEMENTS ON JIHAD

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz, *Okaz*, December 1, 2007:**
 “Those who speak in mosques and incite youths to travel to Iraq and other areas for what they claim is jihad are viewed as corrupters, and we do not hesitate to stop them.”
- **Shaikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashaikh, Press Release, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC, August 21, 2003:**
 “Muslims must understand that the path of reform never comes through violence. Islam is not a religion of violence. It is a religion of mercy for everyone.... One of the fall-outs from extremism in understanding Islam is that some people call for jihad for the sake of God without justification.... These people, who call for jihad, want to raise the banner of jihad to draw the youth into their ranks, and not to fight for the Almighty God.”

STATEMENTS ON PROMOTING MODERATION

- **Excerpt from the final statement issued by the Arab leaders attending the 19th Summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 29, 2007:**
 “We therefore decide: ...To spread the culture of moderation, tolerance, dialogue, and openness; to reject all forms of terrorism and extremism, as well as all exclusionary racist trends, hatred campaigns and endeavors.”
- **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Organization of the Islamic Conference Summit in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, December 7, 2005:**
 “Fanaticism and extremism cannot grow on an earth whose soil is embedded in the spirit of tolerance, moderation, and balance.... I also look forward to the spread of moderation that embodies the Islamic concept of tolerance.”
- **Shaikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, *Arab News*, November 8, 2003:**
 In his sermon, Shaikh Al-Sudais advised the faithful to make use of Ramadan to win God’s forgiveness and mercy. He stressed the need to teach moderation to the youth. “This is the joint duty of mosque, family, school, university and the media,” he explained.

- **Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, *Arab News*, July 1, 2003:**

“Our youth must be inoculated against alien ideas. Families, schools and mosques as well as the country’s ulema and intellectuals and the media and every sincere person must contribute to this effort in order to expose alien thoughts and show the truth.”

- **King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, addressing the Shura Council, May 17, 2003:**

“...And I say to every citizen that one of the most important obligations is to confront narrow mindedness, regionalism and social division. Confronting these ills is a requirement of our faith and contributes to national unity.

APPENDIX

Address by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue New York, New York, November 12, 2008

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,
Your Majesties, Highnesses, Excellencies,
His Excellency the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations,
Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations
Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.

In the presence of this gathering of international leaders and representatives and members of the General Assembly – the conscience of the United Nations – and in front of the whole world, we state with a unified voice that religions through which Almighty God sought to bring happiness to mankind should not be turned into instruments to cause misery. Human beings were created as equals and partners on this planet; either they live together in peace and harmony, or they will inevitably be consumed by the flames of misunderstanding, malice and hatred.

Dear Friends:

Throughout history, preoccupation with differences between the followers of religions and cultures has engendered intolerance, causing devastating wars and considerable bloodshed without any sound logical or ideological justification. It is high time for us to learn from the harsh lessons of the past and concur on the ethics and ideals in which we all believe. Matters on which we differ will be decided by our Omniscient Creator on the Day of Judgment. Every tragedy suffered in today's world is ultimately a result of the abandonment of the paramount principle enunciated by all religions and cultures: The roots of all global crises can be found in human denial of the eternal principle of justice.

Terrorism and criminality are the enemies of every religion and every civilization. They would not have appeared except for the absence of the principle of tolerance. The alienation and the sense of loss which affects the lives of many of our young, leading them to drugs and crime, became widespread due to the dissolution of family bonds that Almighty God intended to be firm and strong.

Our dialogue, conducted in a constructive manner, should, by the grace of God, revive and reinstate these lofty ideals among peoples and nations. No doubt, God willing, this will constitute a glorious triumph of what is most noble over what is most evil in human beings and will grant mankind hope of a future in which justice, security and a decent life will prevail over injustice, fear and poverty.

Dear Friends:

I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. I am also grateful to my friends, the world's leaders from the East and the West, for attending. I take pride in their friendship and participation. On this occasion permit me to

invite the participants in the Madrid Dialogue to elect a committee to represent them and undertake the task of conducting the dialogue in the coming days and years.

I can assure them and all the states of the world, their peoples, their leaders and their organizations, that our concern for the dialogue stems from our Islamic faith and values and our compassion for the human condition in order to overcome its miseries.

We will continue what we have commenced, extending our hand to all those advocating peace, justice and tolerance.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all of you, and myself, of the words of the Holy Qur'an:

"O Mankind! We have created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that ye may know each other. Very, the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you."

Peace and the mercy and blessings of God be with you.

**King Abdullah's Opening Remarks at the World Conference on Dialogue
Madrid, Spain, July 16, 2008**

In the name of God, most merciful, most compassionate.

Praise be to God Almighty, who revealed in his holy book: "O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you."

And peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Mohammed and on all the prophets and messengers.

Your Majesty, my friend, Juan Carlos, King of Spain:

Distinguished friends:

I greet you, and I thank you for responding to our invitation to this dialogue. I appreciate the efforts you are making in the service of humanity. I extend my deep appreciation to my friend, His Majesty King Juan Carlos, and the Kingdom of Spain and its friendly people for welcoming the convening of this conference on their land, a land that has a historic and civilized heritage among the followers of religions, and which has witnessed coexistence between people of differing ethnicities and religions and cultures, and contributed, with other civilizations, to the advancement of humanity.

Dear friends:

I came to you from the place dearest to the hearts of all Muslims, the land of the Two Holy Mosques, bearing with me a message from the Islamic world (Ummah), representing its scholars and thinkers who recently met in the confines of the House of God. This message declares that Islam is a religion of moderation and tolerance; a message that calls for constructive dialogue among followers of religions; a message that promises to open a new page for humanity in which – God willing – concord will replace conflict.

Dear friends:

We all believe in one God, who sent messengers for the good of humanity in this world and the hereafter. His will, praise be to Him, was that people should differ in their faiths. If the Almighty had so desired, all mankind would have shared the same religion. We are meeting today to affirm that the religions that God Almighty desired for the happiness of man should be a means to ensure that happiness.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to declare to the world that difference must not lead to conflict and confrontation, and to state that the tragedies that have occurred in human history were not attributable to religion, but were the result of extremism with which some adherents of every divinely revealed religion, and of every political ideology, have been afflicted.

Mankind is suffering today from a loss of values and conceptual confusion, and is passing through a critical phase which, in spite of all the scientific progress, is witnessing a

proliferation of crime, an increase in terrorism, the disintegration of the family, subversion of the minds of the young by drug abuse, exploitation of the poor by the strong, and odious racist tendencies. This is all a consequence of the spiritual void from which people suffer when they forget God, and God causes them to forget themselves. There is no solution for us other than to agree on a united approach, through dialogue among religions and civilizations.

Dear friends:

Most of the past dialogues have failed because they have deteriorated into mutual recrimination focusing on and exaggerating differences in a sterile endeavor that exacerbated rather than mitigated tensions, or because they attempted to fuse religions and creeds on the pretext of bringing them closer together. This is likewise a fruitless effort, since the adherents of every religion are deeply convinced in their faith, and will not accept any alternative thereto. If we wish this historic meeting to succeed, we must focus on the common denominators that unite us, namely, deep faith in God, noble principles, and lofty moral values, which constitute the essence of religion.

Dear friends:

Man could be the cause of the destruction of this planet and everything in it. He is also capable of turning it into an oasis of peace and tranquility in which adherents of religions, creeds and philosophies could co-exist, and in which people could cooperate with each other in a respectful manner, and address problems through dialogue rather than violence.

Man is also capable – by the grace of God – of vanquishing hatred through love, and bigotry through tolerance, thereby enabling all mankind to enjoy the dignity that the Almighty has bestowed upon all of them.

Dear friends:

Let our dialogue be a triumph of belief over disbelief, of virtue over vice, of justice over iniquity, of peace over conflicts and wars, and of human brotherhood over racism.

Thus, with God we began, and through Him we seek assistance. I offer you my sincere greetings and appreciation.

Thank you and peace be upon you.

**Opening Address by King Abdullah at the
International Islamic Conference for Dialogue
Makkah, Saudi Arabia, June 4, 2008**

In the Name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful. Thanks to Allah the Almighty, and Peace and Blessings upon the seal of the Prophets, prayer and peace be upon his family and companions.

Brothers, Muslim scholars and thinkers, may Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you all.

From the land of Revelation and land of Message, I welcome you with warmest greetings, beseeching Almighty Allah to give us the unrelenting determination, a power not afflicted by weakness and makes us from those whom Allah said about them:

“Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!” (41: 34)

Dear Brothers:

You gathered today to say to the world around us, with confidence which Allah bestowed upon us. We are the voice of justice and human moral values, and we are the voice of rational and just coexistence and dialogue, the voice of wisdom and admonition, and argumentation with the best way possible. As Allah says:

“Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.” (16:125)

God willing we will do so.

Dear Brothers:

How great this nation is, how difficult the challenges it faces in a time where its enemies – extremists from its sons and others – join forces to change its fair approach. They are gathered with blatant aggressiveness to target the tolerance, justice and noble purposes of Islam.

For this reason, this invitation from your brother is to counter challenges of rigidity, ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and to make the world accommodate the concepts and the prospects of the kind message of Islam without enmity and antagonism.

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” (49:13)

Dear Brothers:

Islam will remain fortified by the will of Allah Almighty and then with the conscience of Muslim scholars, thinkers and his followers.

Islam's greatness founded the concepts of dialogue, and sets its milestones which are reflected in Allah saying: "Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee." (3: 159)

Our hearts are full – praise to Allah -- by faith, tolerance and love, which Allah, the Creator, ordered us to obtain.

Yes, dear brother, the way to the others is through shared values advocated by the divine messages, which were revealed by Allah the Almighty for the benefit of humanity to preserve their dignity and promote the ethical values and dealings which certainly are not in conformity with deception.

These values reject treason, alienate crime, combat terrorism, and despise lying. They lay the bases for good morals, honesty, truthfulness, justice, and enhance the concepts of family values and its cohesion and ethics, which are slowly diminishing at present and disintegrating ties, and where human beings are distancing themselves from their Lord and the teachings of their religion.

Dear Brothers:

From the vicinity of the Holy Mosque of Makkah, we begin with the will of Allah. From there, we will move in our dialogue with the others in confidence derived from our faith in Allah and then from knowledge sought from our tolerant religion. We will argue in ways that are best, what we agree upon we accept it in our hearts and what we disagree about we refer to the Sublime saying: "To you be your way, and to me mine." (109:6)

Before I conclude my speech, I'm pleased to extend my thanks to the Muslim World League and its personnel and to every one who contributed to the success of this conference.

In the name of Allah, we start, and in Allah is our trust.

Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon you all.

Letter from Crown Prince Abdullah to President Bush on Anniversary of 9/11

JEDDAH (September 10, 2002): As the world marks this first anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia sends a message on behalf of the Saudi people to America. In a letter conveyed to President Bush and the American people, Crown Prince Abdullah wrote:

On the eve of the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks against the American people, I take the opportunity to renew to you and the families of the victims and indeed the entire American nation, the sincere condolences and sympathy of the Saudi people and myself. As long as I live, I shall never forget the horrible scenes of carnage, the raging fires, the smoke that covered the horizon, and the innocent people who jumped out of the windows in their attempt to escape. On that fateful day, the whole world stood with the American people in unprecedented solidarity that made no distinction as to race, religion or language.

It was the perverted hope of the perpetrators of this heinous crime that they could bring humiliation to, and terrorize the American nation. But the brave people of the United States of America, whose greatness lies in the strength of its brave sons and daughters in facing adversity, and which is enriched by their remarkable achievements, all of this will make them ever stronger than the designs of the evildoers. Instead of being terrorized by this catastrophe, they became more steadfast and determined.

The target of the terrorists who engineered this crime was humanity at large. They hoped that this outrageous act would incite and ignite bloody strife among different faiths and civilizations. But their evil was turned against them, for all humanity united to fight terrorism, and wise voices from all corners of the world arose to echo your declaration that terrorism has no religion or nationality; that it is pure evil, condemned and abhorred by all religions and cultures.

Mr. President:

We in Saudi Arabia felt an especially great pain at the realization that a number of young Saudi citizens had been enticed and deluded and their reasoning subverted to the degree of denying the tolerance that their religion embraced, and turning their backs on their homeland, which always stood for understanding and moderation. They allowed themselves to be used as a tool to do great damage to Islam, a religion they espoused, and to all Muslims. They also aimed at causing considerable harm to the historic and strong relationship between the American people and the people of Saudi Arabia.

I would like to make it clear that true Muslims all over the world will never allow a minority of deviant extremists to speak in the name of Islam and distort its spirit of tolerance. Your friends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia denounced and condemned the September 11 attacks as strongly as did the American people. We, like you, are convinced that nothing can ever justify the shedding of innocent blood or the taking of lives and the terrorizing of people, regardless of whatever cause or motive. Therefore, we do not simply reiterate sincere and true condolences to the relatives of the victims, but assure all of our continued will and determination to do our utmost to combat this malignant evil and uproot it from our world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to stand solidly against terrorism. We shall act, independently as well as collectively, with the U.S.-led international coalition to wage a fierce and merciless war against the terrorists in order to eradicate this deadly disease that threatens all societies.

In conclusion, I would like to say to you, my dear friend, that God Almighty, in His wisdom, tests the faithful by allowing such calamities to happen. But He, in His mercy, also provides us with the will and determination, generated by faith, to enable us to transform such tragedies into great achievements, and crises that seem debilitating are transformed into opportunities for the advancement of humanity. I only hope that, with your cooperation and leadership, a new world will emerge out of the rubble of the World Trade Center; a world that is blessed by the virtues of freedom, peace, prosperity and harmony.”

Sincerely,

Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud
Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister,
and Commander of the National Guard



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The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism

June 2009

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism

International terrorism threatens the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its allies and the global community. Defeating the terrorist enemy requires sound policies, concerted government efforts and international cooperation. The primary mission of the Saudi government is to forge partnerships with multilateral organizations and foreign governments to advance counterterrorism objectives and protect the national security of the Kingdom. Working with international partners, Saudi Arabia has taken a leading role in developing coordinated strategies to defeat terrorists at home and abroad, to thwart extremist advancements and to rehabilitate at-risk populations.

Background

For the Saudi people, terrorism and extremism have existed as threats dating back for several decades. The most recent manifestation of multinational terrorist efforts—led by Al-Qaeda and its supporters—originated with the end of the Cold War and ongoing strife in post-Soviet Afghanistan. Commensurate with the rise of this threat, Saudi Arabia sought to isolate and defeat it, and as early as 1994 froze the assets and rescinded the citizenship of Osama bin Laden. The Kingdom sought to improve its international partnerships, and took steps to facilitate the extradition of terror suspects and upgrade intelligence gathering capabilities.

Following the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen in 2000 and the attacks of September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia intensified its efforts to go after the men, money and mindset that support terrorism and extremism. Provoked by the Kingdom's actions, as well as by military activities in neighboring Iraq, Al-Qaeda commenced a number of direct attacks in Saudi Arabia in 2003—including bombings and kidnappings. Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism framework allowed security forces to mount a coordinated response that has since effectively dismantled Al-Qaeda's organization in the Kingdom. The last in-country attack by Al-Qaeda operatives took place in February 2006, and failed; security at the targeted facility thwarted the attack.

The Men: Counterterrorism Training & Technology

During the last decade, the Saudi government, the Ministry of Interior and relevant agencies have fundamentally restructured operations and coordination to better address national security threats and prevent terrorist attacks. Much of this activity has been aimed at dismantling the physical presence of Al-Qaeda and the ability of militants to operate from or within the Kingdom.

To do so effectively, the size, training and professionalism of Saudi security forces have increased on a year-over-year basis. Security professionals regularly participate in joint programs throughout the world, including in Europe and the United States. Recently, the Training College of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and the Council of Arab Interior Ministers jointly organized a course in Tunisia on combating terrorism. The course

covered topics such as terror cells, the role of religion in fighting terrorism, the contradiction of terrorism with Islamic law, and the Saudi experience in dealing with terrorism.

Saudi security agents also work with their international counterparts to conduct missions and exchange information. Saudi Arabia and the United States have established two joint task forces—one that pursues leads to terrorist activities and another that tracks terror financing.

These efforts to enhance the sophistication of Saudi Arabia's human resources have been complemented by the deployment of new technologies that assist in safeguarding the Kingdom. Examples include:

- Aerial reconnaissance drones that patrol remote areas and provide security forces with real-time data to protect against smuggling and infiltration.
- Thermal imaging systems, motion detectors and electronic sensor fencing that assist in sealing Saudi Arabia's borders with Iraq, Yemen and Jordan.
- A dedicated 15,000-troop armed boarder patrol that covers both land and sea with a fleet of four-wheel-drive vehicles, boats and helicopters.

In addition to adopting enhanced tactics to patrol the county's desolate borderlands, the Saudi government has also implemented soft-counterterrorism measures designed to confront threats in the Kingdom's dense urban areas. Neighborhood police units engage and work directly with community members, encouraging citizens to provide tips and leads about suspicious activity. This approach has led to arrests of most-wanted terrorists and to the discovery of safe houses where terrorists were meeting, plotting and staging attacks.

Throughout the last decade, these activities—training, education, the inclusion of technology and community outreach—have allowed Saudi security forces to foil more than 180 terrorist plots within the Kingdom and to dismantle Al-Qaeda's operations. The last in-country terrorist attack took place in February 2006, when four militants attempted to break into Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq oil facility. Together, Saudi security forces and Saudi Aramco employees thwarted the attack, and reconnaissance of fleeing suspects resulted in the capture of additional suspects and the discovery of additional terrorist safe houses.

Despite their effectiveness, these activities have not come without sacrifice. In combating terrorist-related events, more than 90 Saudi security officers have died and more than 200 have been wounded carrying out their duties. Casualty rates have decreased in recent years, as a result of improved training, experience and preventative activities—including increased efforts to combat the financing of terrorism and to eradicate the influence of extremist ideologies.

The Money: Combating Terror Financing

By 2003, the Saudi government had put in place the majority of its new financial controls and banking regulations aimed at stopping those who financially support terrorism and extremism within Saudi borders and beyond. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) had issued instructions to all Saudi financial institutions to implement the 40

recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the G-8 countries regarding money laundering and the eight recommendations regarding terror financing. The Saudi Arabian Financial Crimes Unit was also established, and in September 2005 it transitioned to become the Kingdom's official Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), specially tasked with handling money laundering and terror finance cases. Saudi Arabia is currently seeking its admittance into the Egmont Group.

The FATF commented on all of these activities in its 15th annual report (July 2004), which contained an evaluation of Saudi Arabia's laws, regulations and systems to combat money laundering and terror financing. According to the report: "Saudi authorities have focused heavily on systems and measures to counter terrorism and the financing of terrorism. Specifically, they have taken action to increase the requirements for financial institutions on customer due diligence, established systems for tracing and freezing terrorist assets, and tightened the regulation and transparency of charitable organizations."

To ensure the success of these controls and regulations, the Saudi government created special training programs for bankers, prosecutors, judges, customs officers and other officials from government departments and agencies. Programs are offered by the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (formerly the Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences) and the King Fahd Security Faculty, Public Security Training City. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) also offers programs, and has implemented a technical program to train judges and investigators on legal matters involving terrorism financing and money laundering methods, international requirements for financial secrecy, and methods exercised by criminals to exchange information.

A central aspect of regulating financial controls has been ensuring oversight of charitable giving -- a key tenet of the Islamic faith. There are thousands of Islamic charities in the Kingdom. To bring order to these organizations, the Saudi government instituted direct oversight of charitable organizations, and through SAMA instructed all banks and financial institutions in the Kingdom to stop all financial transfers by Saudi charities to any accounts outside the Kingdom. The government consolidated oversight in 2004, through the issuance of a Royal order approving the creation of the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad with the responsibility for regulating all charitable activities abroad.

Saudi Arabia took additional steps to seek out and stop ongoing illicit activities. The Saudi government and the United States jointly designated several organizations as financiers of terrorism under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267, including: the Bosnia-based Vazir and the Liechtenstein-based Hochburg AG; four branch offices of the Al-Haramain Foundation (Kenya, Tanzania, Pakistan and Indonesia); and, earlier in the year, five additional branch offices of Al-Haramain—an organization which is now dissolved.

The Kingdom coordinates such efforts with multiple international partners, including Great Britain, which, together with Saudi Arabia, jointly froze the assets of Saad Al-Faqih's London-based Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) for allegedly providing support to Al-Qaeda. Al-Faqih is named on the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 list of individuals tied to Al-Qaeda.

Since terrorists and terror financiers do not operate solely within the borders of any particular nation, Saudi Arabia holds international cooperation as a central component to the success of its counterterrorism efforts. Saudi officials, security and counterterrorism experts work with their counterparts at every level of governments throughout the world to ensure programmatic effectiveness and to maintain cooperation.

Specifically, to help further patrol the areas of charity, banking and money laundering, agents from the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) work with Saudi financial experts to track leads and share intelligence. In February 2008, Saudi Arabia and France signed a new civil service agreement to enhance bilateral cooperation in the areas of counterterrorism, anti-narcotics and to combat money laundering.

Since the formulation of these controls and the implementation of the training programs, the Saudi government has prosecuted numerous individuals suspected of financing terrorism, and has frozen bank accounts, filed charges against and convicted individuals.

The Mindset: Overcoming Extremism

As a part of Saudi Arabia's long-term counterterrorism strategy, and to complement efforts to track and halt the activities of terrorists and terror financiers, the Kingdom pursues "soft" counterterrorism policies. These include everything from direct outreach to Saudi society at large to terrorist reeducation efforts. This approach constitutes a "war of ideas," which aims to instill the concepts of moderation and tolerance, and to undermine any justifications for extremism and terrorism on an intellectual level. In doing so, Saudi Arabia is protecting vulnerable groups, such as youth, and any potentially disenfranchised elements of society.

Broadly, the Kingdom has undertaken several initiatives to counter the extremist mentality and to promote moderation and tolerance among its citizenry.

- Public Awareness Campaign: Initiated a public awareness campaign to reinforce the true values of the Islamic faith and to educate Saudi citizens about the dangers of extremism and terrorism. The campaign included advertisements on television, radio and billboards, as well as programs on television, in schools and mosques, and at sporting events. The centerpiece of the campaign was a series of public service announcements that aired up to 25 times a day on a number of Arabic satellite networks, including Al-Arabiya, MBC and Future Television, as well as on Saudi TV channels. Six government ministries coordinated the development and execution of the programs.
- Public & Religious Education: Conducting an ongoing program to modernize textbooks and curricula, to introduce enhanced teaching methods and provide better training for educators. Efforts such as these combat extremism and prepare Saudi citizens for life in a global economy. These developments also extend to Saudi religious schools. Imams have been prohibited from incitement and talk of intolerance, and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs is conducting a program to educate imams and monitor mosques and religious education to purge extremism and intolerance.

- Global Interfaith Dialogue Initiative: Launched an international effort to promote interfaith dialogue. In early 2008, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz launched the interfaith dialogue as a way to underscore the commonalities among the world's religions. To initiate this endeavor, King Abdullah convened a meeting on June 4, 2008 of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world. The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue and emphasized the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. This was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Spain on July 16, 2008. The conference, hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos I of Spain, brought together 300 delegates from around the world representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shintoism. The culmination of this dialogue initiative was a special session of the UN General Assembly on November 12, 2008, attended by more than 25 world leaders including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, former U.S. President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Jordan's King Abdullah II.

On a more advanced, focused level, Saudi Arabia has also been conducting two different, yet complementary programs: "Counter-Radicalization" and "Rehabilitation." Whereas the broader public programs are preventative in nature, each of these programs go directly to the active source of extremism propagation and serve to neutralize it.

In creating these programs, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior drew on the expertise of a group of international social scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other physicians and experts to create strategies tailored to radicalism. In addition, the Ministry has been working in conjunction with King Fahd Security College and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences to develop and refine the training activities for public security professionals.

- Counter-Radicalization Program: The purpose of the program is to combat the spread and appeal of extremist ideologies among the general populous. It strives to instill the true values of the Islamic faith, such as tolerance and moderation. Central to this effort is education about the dangers of radical Islam—consisting of school and religious programs and popular pronouncements, and the provision of positive, alternative outlets for at-risk groups—such as encouraging participation in sporting events and athletic programs, social outings, etc.
- Rehabilitation Program: The rehabilitation program is intended to reintegrate deviants/extremists back into society, change their behavior (disengage them) and change their beliefs (de-radicalize them). It is designed to target deviants who have completed their prison sentences. The program reeducates violent extremists and extremist sympathizers through intensive religious debates and psychological counseling. The goal is for them to renounce ideologies that espouse terrorism. Any individual who has committed or participated in a violent crime, constituting murder, will not be released following completion of the course.

Saudi Arabia's rehabilitation program for detainees is the longest continually functioning rehabilitation program in the world, and several countries are establishing similar programs based on the Kingdom's model, including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States military through "Task Force 134" in Iraq.

While the program has obtained positive results, the Saudi government views terrorism as a serious, ongoing threat and the Kingdom continues to refine its programs and enlist more detainees in hopes of disengaging and de-radicalizing them.

Conclusion

Although successful in the design and implementation of its counterterrorism programs during the last decade, Saudi Arabia continues to perfect its initiatives, as terrorism remains a continuing threat to the safety and security of its citizenry and those of the global community. Greater international cooperation and coordination will only serve to further mitigate extremist incitement and terrorist activities. To this end, the Kingdom has taken many steps to generate improved international cooperation, including in 2005, when King Abdullah held the "Counter-Terrorism International Conference" in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The event featured ministerial-level delegates from 51 countries and nine international organizations who participated in various counterterrorism workshops and sessions.

Saudi Arabia continues to seek ways to improve its ability to identify, penetrate and dismantle terrorist plots through structural reforms, the development of new intelligence and law enforcement tools, and an approach that values information sharing, communication and prevention. The Kingdom conducts its counterterrorism programs with international partners.



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The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Political, Economic and Development Initiatives

June 2009

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Political, Economic and Development Initiatives

During the last 50 years, Saudi Arabia has experienced rapid economic development and corresponding societal and political change. To balance this with the nation's rich cultural and religious heritage and facilitate continued progress, the Saudi government has undertaken a number of political and economic initiatives to educate and encourage political participation, promote economic growth, increase foreign investment and expand educational and employment opportunities for its citizens. These have allowed the Kingdom to play a larger role in the global economy and community. Efforts to promote greater privatization and diversification of the Saudi economy continue to take place alongside ongoing political and social developments.

Background

When the modern Kingdom was established in 1932, the Arabian Peninsula was an agricultural society that depended on farming and commerce—especially date exports and trade generated by pilgrims coming to Makkah and Madinah. It lacked the infrastructure needed to support the kind of economic growth envisioned by its founder, King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud. The discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 1938 changed that. Soon after World War II, steady oil exports provided the funds to build a basic infrastructure of roads, airports, seaports, schools and hospitals.

By 1970, Saudi Arabia introduced the first of a series of ongoing five-year development plans to build a modern economy and society capable of producing consumer and industrial goods that previously had been imported. The country's infrastructure was expanded, allowing industry and commerce to flourish. At the same time, the national oil company, Aramco, invested in new production facilities, pipelines, plants and shipping facilities, and continued exploring for new deposits to maximize earnings from the oil sector, which were needed to fund further growth. The result was a steady economic transformation of the country, which joined the World Trade Organization in 2005. Today, Saudi Arabia is one of the fastest developing countries in the world.

Commensurate with this rapid modernization were developments in the country's political and administrative system, which had evolved from a standard monarchy to include the formalization of the Islamic system of popular consultation. By the 1990s, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdulaziz moved to revitalize the existing political system in order to streamline it to meet the requirements of a modern nation. Taking into consideration the Kingdom's role in the Islamic world, as well as its traditions and social fabric, the changes were made in total adherence to Islam.

These efforts led to a move toward greater participation of the citizenry in the governing of their country, and the Saudi government approved procedures for the election of half the members of the municipal councils. Elections took place in early 2005, and initiatives to promote education, modernization and diversification are ongoing.

Education: Preparation for the Global Economy

Saudi Arabia views its citizens as the most essential element of the nation's development. To support the Kingdom's continued growth and to meet the needs of a burgeoning youth population, the government allocates about 25 percent of its annual budget to educational initiatives. In Saudi Arabia today, there are 19 public universities, more than 100 colleges and more than 26,000 schools, with more educational institutions planned. Approximately 5 million students are enrolled in the system, which has a student to teacher ratio of 11-to-1, representing one of the lowest in the world. Some of the broader initiatives the Kingdom has undertaken during the last decade to support this infrastructure growth include:

- *A multi-year program to update textbooks and curricula, introduce new teaching methods and provide better training for teachers.*
- *The establishment of student councils in public schools to begin educating young Saudis about civic responsibilities and participatory governance.*
- *A 25-year strategy developed by the Ministry of Education to align the higher education system with the country's development and job market requirements.*

To extend the reach of the Saudi education system, the Kingdom's universities have established numerous partnerships with world-class institutions. These collaborative efforts foster the development of shared academic programs.

The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), for example, has entered into Academic Excellence Alliance partnerships with Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley in the United States. KAUST has enlisted the help of Stanford's Applied Mathematics and Computational Science Department and Berkeley's Mechanical Engineering Department to assist with curriculum development, to nominate founding faculty and to establish a collaborative research direction for the new university.

Other such arrangements include an agreement signed in March 2008 for scientific and academic cooperation between the Jeddah Community College and Louisiana Community and Technical College System. The Naif Arab University for Security Sciences also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland in May 2008. The agreement includes joint scientific research, program organization and the exchange of scientific publications.

Such efforts to promote learning, interaction and exchange on the global level are indicative of the overall approach the Saudi government has taken with respect to education. Epitomizing this is the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, in which qualified Saudi students are sent to attend colleges and universities around the world to learn, make friends and experience foreign cultures. The Saudi government has offered scholarships to more than 50,000 students, who are attending schools in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and other nations.

Education: Fostering Opportunities for Women

Approximately half the students enrolled in Saudi schools are female, and of the more than 600,000 students at Saudi universities and colleges, women comprise 58 percent of the student body. The Kingdom has therefore undertaken several initiatives to support the educational and professional development of women in Saudi society.

Examples of these efforts include Dar Al-Hekma, the Kingdom's first private college for women, which will become a university following Minister of Higher Education's approval for four new faculties in September 2008. Dar Al-Hekma's new faculties will include a Faculty of Health Sciences and Humanities, a Faculty of Law and International Relations, a Faculty of Business and Economy and a Faculty of Design and Architecture.

In October 2008, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz laid the foundation stone for the Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University for Girls, one of the world's largest institutions of higher learning exclusively for women. The new university will have a 700-bed hospital and 15 colleges, including those for medicine, dentistry, nursing, naturopathy and pharmacology. It will also feature an administrative area, staff housing and public facilities including mosques and a transportation system. The project is expected to be completed by 2010.

Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education reserve jobs for women of distinguished status. Accounting, banking and computer training centers have also opened to prepare women for jobs, as have training programs organized by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training and implemented by the Ministry of Labor. In addition, the technological, medical, and automotive sectors have opened avenues of opportunity to women.

Modernization: Promoting Development

Developments on the educational front have been complemented by those within the political system. In 2009, King Abdullah made a series of changes within the government:

- *King Abdullah issued a Royal order appointing Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz to the position of Second Deputy Prime Minister*
- *Nourah Al-Fayez was appointed Deputy Minister of Education for Women's Education. She is the first woman to be appointed to the Council of Ministers.*
- *A new Secretary General of the Judiciary Supreme Council*
- *A new Secretary General of the Supreme Economic Commission*
- *A new Director General of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice*

King Abdullah also reconstituted the Council of Senior Ulema (Muslim Scholars) by appointing new members and extending the tenures of others. Sheikh Dr. Fahd bin Saad Al-Majed was appointed the new Secretary General of the Ulema, and Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Aasheikh was reappointed chairman of the Commission of Senior Ulema.

In addition to new appointments, the Saudi government has also included popular elections within the system. The Kingdom's first municipal elections were held in 2005. The elections for members of the nation's municipal councils were held in three phases and a total of 592 representatives were elected.

These political developments are consistent with the types of changes that have occurred regularly throughout the nation's history. In 1992, just as his father had before him, King Fahd improved the existing political system by introducing three major political developments to modernize the government within the framework of the Kingdom's traditions:

- The formation of the Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura): The Consultative Council now consists of 150 members who serve four-year terms. The membership is divided into 12 committees: human rights, security, economics, finance, foreign affairs, public services, transportation and communications, social and health services, culture and information, administration, Islamic affairs, and education.
- The establishment of Regional Councils in each of Saudi Arabia's 13 provinces: The Councils review management of the provinces by their respective local governments.
- The introduction of the Basic Law of Governance: Similar to a constitution, the Basic Law outlines the goals and responsibilities of the government and defines the relationship between the ruler and citizens.

This continuous movement to improve and streamline the government and how it responds to the needs to the Saudi people is all a part of Saudi Arabia's strategy to ensure the long-term success of the country and to institutionalize best practices. Consistent with this, the Royal Court announced on October 20, 2006 the establishment of the Allegiance Commission to formalize the Royal succession. Under the new system, the King will nominate a Crown Prince, and the Allegiance Commission will vote on the candidate. In December 2007, King Abdullah issued a Royal decree naming 35 members of the Royal family to the Allegiance Commission.

Diversification: Building an Economy for the Future

With one-quarter of the world's known oil reserves and 13 percent of world production, Saudi Arabia is the world's leading producer and exporter of oil. Its policies on the production and export of oil and petroleum products have a clear impact on the global energy market and the global economy. Mindful of its responsibility, Saudi Arabia has remained committed to ensuring stability of oil supplies and prices.

In the fall of 2002, to maintain market stability, Saudi Arabia boosted oil production to compensate for the fall in Venezuelan production; in the spring of 2003, it boosted output to compensate for the loss of Iraqi production; and to meet increasing global demand through 2008, Saudi Arabia increased its capacity in 2004 to 11 million bpd—while then refocusing its approach toward the end of that year to stabilize prices in the face of the global economic contraction.

As of the end of 2007, Saudi Arabia's proven oil reserves consist of 264 billion barrels, with undiscovered resources estimated at 200 billion barrels. At the current rate of production, reserves will last for approximately 80 years, allowing the Kingdom to provide the global market with adequate quantities of crude oil the world can depend on for its prosperity and economic growth.

Given the finite nature of Saudi Arabia's natural resources and the historical importance they have played in the nation's development, the Kingdom has taken precautions to expand its economic base to minimize its reliance on this resource as a sole supply of government revenue. In 2008, the non-oil GDP grew by 4.5 percent to \$223 billion. Saudi Arabia's non-petroleum exports increased to \$2.7 billion in May 2008, up from \$2.3 billion in May 2007.

Aiding this transition away from reliance on oil, the Kingdom has taken steps to privatize many of its vital economic sectors. The Supreme Economic Council has led these efforts by specifying the sectors to be privatized and establishing strategic plans to implement the change. Sectors that are now open to privatization include: telecommunications, civil aviation, desalination, highway management, railways, sports clubs, health services, government hotels, municipal services, education services, operation and management of social service centers, Saudi employment services, agricultural services, construction and management of abattoirs, public parks and recreation centers, and cleaning and waste collection. As a result, in 2008 the private sector grew by 8 percent and contributed an estimated 46 percent to the GDP. The government also signed 2,500 new projects with the private sector worth a total value of \$32 billion.

Other efforts to encourage investment in the Saudi economy include:

- The Saudi Arabian Capital Markets Law: Passed in June 2003, the law has stimulated and strengthened the Saudi economy and increased the participation of Saudi citizens in the capital markets by establishing the Saudi Arabian Securities and Exchange Commission (SASEC) to protect investor interests, ensure fair business practices, promote and develop the capital market, license brokers and securities to the public and the Saudi Arabian Stock Exchange (SASE), which is the largest in the region.
- Foreign Investment Law: Enacted by the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), the law allows foreign investors to own property, transfer capital and profits, claim full ownership of their projects and enjoy a reduction in tax rates. It also protects foreign investors from confiscation of property without a court order or expropriation of property, except for public interest, against an equitable compensation.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia's investments in modernizing its education and political system and opening its economy to increased foreign investment, privatization and diversification have together prepared the Kingdom and its citizens well for their participation in the global economy and community. Together, these developments and a decade of other economic reforms led to Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization, making the nation the 149th

member of the organization on December 11, 2005. This has opened the Saudi economy to unprecedented opportunities for foreign investment and job creation. The best indicator of Saudi Arabia's economic growth is the increase in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from \$20 billion in 1970 to \$467.5 billion in 2008.



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